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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - Somaliland Crisis Turns Violent as Police Kill  
Four

REF: Nairobi 1896

11. (SBU) Summary: In a violent escalation of Somaliland's political crisis, on September 12, police opened fire during a peaceful demonstration near the House of Representatives in Hargeisa. Four people were killed, including a 15-year-old boy, and several more were injured. Possibly over 100 people were detained in indiscriminate arrests. The protestors had accompanied the Speaker and approximately 20 members of Parliament who were attempting to convene their first session since police forcibly closed the chambers on September 8. Parliament re-opened on September 14, and the legislative body plans to re-convene on September 15. End summary.

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President Reneges on Promise  
To Re-Open Parliament  
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12. (SBU) On September 10, the Chairing Committee of the House of Representatives issued a press release, stating that it would not accept the closure of Parliament and rallying public support for its efforts to re-open the building on September 12. The building had been surrounded by a heavy police presence since it was closed on September 8.

13. (SBU) On September 11, we confirmed that President Riyale had agreed to open parliament the morning of September 12. However, also on September 11, leaders within the UDUB ruling party and the pro-government parliamentary group rejected Riyale's decision, and we understand that key advisors urged Riyale to take a stronger stand, and not allow Parliament to be reopened. In a September 11 press conference, the Chairman of the Guurti urged the public to remain calm.

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Police Fire at Protestors  
Killing Four in Hargeisa  
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14. (SBU) On September 12, police opened fire during a peaceful public demonstration in Hargeisa. The incident occurred near Parliament, as the Speaker, backed by MPs and the public, attempted to re-open the building. (Note: Reftel reports on the forced closure of Parliament by police acting on the orders of President Riyale and the Minister of Interior). Police initially attempted to push back and control the crowd, directing them to disperse from the area. After police requested reinforcements, the Police Commander reportedly instructed them to open fire and clear the road of civilians.

¶5. (SBU) Ibrahim Musa Wais, Executive Director of the Hargeisa-based Samotalis Coalition of Human Rights, confirmed that four people had been killed, including a 15-year old boy. One man died immediately after being shot by police; three others died later of bullet wounds. At least five others were shot, including a mother of four who was shot near the hospital while going to visit a relative. Health officials at Hargeisa Group Hospital have stated that dozens of civilians were wounded.

¶6. (SBU) Our contacts confirmed that several police officers were also injured, as protestors burned and threw stones at government vehicles. One unconfirmed report indicated that several police officers died when their vehicle was bombed, but other reports say that the explosion was caused when a police grenade went off inside the vehicle.

¶7. (SBU) On September 13, a public protest in the city of Burao remained peaceful; police did not directly intervene with the gathering.

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Indiscriminate Arrests  
Possible Extra-Judicial Proceedings  
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¶8. (SBU) Several human rights organizations report that once the gunfire stopped and the crowds dispersed, police began making indiscriminate arrests. Fawsi Sheikh, a human rights lawyer, reported that that over 100 people were detained in Hargeisa Central Police Station alone. The next day, several opposition leaders were

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reportedly arrested in their homes, without police warrants. Two women leaders of the Kulmiye party--Khadra Ali Jama and Hinda Hirsi Idle, both related to Kulmiye Chairman Ahmed Mohamed Silanyo--were charged with leading the popular uprising and are still being detained. Human rights advocates expressed fear that detainees may be tried secretly by the National Security Committee and directly transferred to Madheera Prison. None of the advocates has been allowed access to the detainees, and government officials have refused to talk about the arrests.

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Government Blames the Opposition  
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¶9. (SBU) All of our contacts agree that the police killings were a result of the government's heightened security posture and strategy to take a more confrontational stance with the opposition. In a September 12 interview with BBC Somali Service, President Riyale blamed the Speaker of the House and the Kulmiye opposition party for the events. When we spoke with Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullahi Duale on September 12, he expressed the same.

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